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Urbanite

Report: Big MTA projects suffer from delays, overruns

Tuesday October 20, 2009 6:44 PM By Heather Haddon



A good government group Tuesday denounced the MTA's handling of big transit projects, criticizing the agency for rampant delays and cost overruns.

The study by the Citizens Budget Commission also pinpointed widespread lapses in reporting for MTA projects like the Second Avenue Subway. Researchers were struck by the "persistence and magnitude" of the discrepancies, said Charles Brecher, a

report author.

Study authors reviewing the MTA's \$19 billion, 800-project capital plan between 2005 and 2007 found:

- Of the five big subway construction projects, only the South Ferry Terminal has gone according to schedule.
- Reports about station renovations failed to track about a third of the stops the agency committed to overhauling.
- The delivery of 1,280 new subway cars was eight months late, and a contract to improve subway communication cables is five years behind schedule.

New MTA chief Jay Walder acknowledged many of the report findings during a presentation Tuesday, and promised to include a database on the status of system upgrades on the MTA Web site by year's end.

Transit advocates praised Walder's idea, saying it will add more detail to what is available in monthly MTA board reports, which don't reflect when projects are scaled back.

"You can't see what's happened with the scope of a project," said William Henderson, executive director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. "You start out with a Rolls-Royce and end up with a Honda."

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[< back to article](#)